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A DIFFICULT MOUNTAIN

KINCHINJUNCA CLIMBERS ILL-FATED EXPEDITIONS

Kinchinjunga is the third highest mountain in the world. It is a peak of the eastern Himalayas, situated on the boundary between Sikkin and Nepal, with an elevation of 28,146 feet. The mountain is best seen from the Indian hill-station of Darjeeling, where the view of this stupendous peak, dominating all intervening ranges and rising from regions; of tropical undergrowth to the altitude of eternal snows, is one of the grandest in the world. In spite of the previous challenge of Kinchinjunga, little was known of the mountain and its environs until the closing years of last century. Many serious attempts on Kinchinjunga and the peaks in the immediate neighbourhood have been made, but it was not until 1905 that a direct attempt was made to climb the mountain. In that year a party consisting of three Swiss and an Italian put itself under the leadership of Aleister Crowley.

BURIED UNDER AVALANCHE.

The expedition proceeded to the Yalung valley, and having marched up the Yalung glacier, attacked the great curtain of icy slopes that fall from the base of the cliffs on the south-west face of Kinchinjunga. At 20,343 ft they established a camp, and one or two of them climbed about 1000 ft higher. One afternoon a party of three, with three natives, commenced to descend the glacier to the lower camp, leaving two of the expedition at the higher one. While traversing a steep snow slope, two of the natives slipped, dragging with them the third native and a white man who were behind, and the doctor of the expedition, who was in front. The doctor and a companion escaped with a severe shaking, but their four comrades, were buried in the avalanche of snow brought down by the fall. Thus ended the first attempt on Kinchinjunga.

ANOTHER LIFE CLAIMED.

No further attempts were made on the summit of this mountain until 1929, though in the years between mountaineers of many nations had climbed high among the surrounding peaks and on Kinchinjunga ridges. Two separate parties attacked the mountain last year, one going before and one after the monsoon. The first effort was one of the most stupid pieces of bad mountaineering that can be imagined. An American, E. Farmer, started from Tseram, a village on the flanks of Kinchinjunga, with three porters and a four days' food supply, and proceeded up the Yalung Glacier, following the route of the ill-fated Crowley expedition. He established three camps, and finally set out with three porters, unequipped with either rope or rucksack. The snow conditions proved very dangerous, and the natives refused to advance any further. The American, however, decided to go on alone, and was last seen by his men climbing up towards the Yalung saddle at about 22,000 feet. He never returned. The second attempt in 1929 was on altogether different lines. The mountain was attacked by a properly equipped and exceptionally strong party of expert Bavarian mountaineers.

FORCED TO RETREAT.

This party met with terrific difficulties. Almost every foot of their progress meant toilsome hacking with the ice axe, pitons had to be driven into the ice, and ropes fixed to enable the laden porters to follow. Their camps were made on ice ledges so narrow that there was scarcely room for more than two climbers at a time. No party had ever encountered difficulties so great as did these Bavarians. A snowstorm, in which no less than six feet of snow fell, forced them down again. Their fortitude and mountaineering skill were displayed in their retreat, which they made in bad weather, after undergoing terrible cold and hardships, which included a bivouac in the open without tents or sleeping bags.

MEMBERS OF PRESENT PARTY.

The present expedition is under the leadership of Professor Guather Dyhrenfurth, a professor of geology at Zurich. He has ascended more than 700 peaks in the Alps, mostly without guides, including 56 new routes and first ascents. Professor

Dyhrenfurth made his first climb at the age of nine, and when he was thirteen he climbed the Rosengartenspitze, one of the best known peaks in the Dolomites.

Frau Dyhrenfurth, who is in charge of one of the base camps, is one of the most outstanding lawn tennis players in Germany. She is also an experienced mountaineer and expert ski-runner. She has accompanied her husband on many expeditions.

Hoerlin and Schneider are considered the most brilliant pair of climbers of the present day. Schneider, who comes from Tyrol, has climbed more than 1000 peaks, 200 of them in one year, which is undoubtedly a record.

The surgeon of the expedition is Dr. H. Richter, who ranks high as an authority on the physiological effects of high altitudes. Marcel Kurz is considered the greatest living Continental authority on winter mountaineering. He is an expert on snowcraft and avalanches, especially from the view of ski-running.

F. S. Smythe, one of the British members of the party, went to the Alps in 1921, where he lived for two years, in that time carrying out a large number of climbs, both on foot and on ski.

The cinematographer with the expedition is Herr Duvanel, who is an expert ski-runner. He has made a number of films of ascents in the Alps, a great majority of them being for instructional purposes for novices in the art of climbing and skiing.